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Sahitya Akademi

in collaboration with

Mithila Sanskritik Sangam, Prayag

meet the author

Jayakanta Mishra





Professor Jayakanta Mishra is a dedicated scholar and discerning critic of Maithili language and literature. He has devoted more than half a century to the study and appreciation of Maithili as perhaps no other single individual has hitherto been able to do. It has been said that 'his name will be handed down to posterity in India as the greatest benefactor of Maithili at present day after that of the illustrious George Abraham Grierson, and will earn for him gratitude of sixteen millions of Maithili speakers in the first instance and of the scholarly world of the whole of India, in the second' (Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his Foreword to *Brihat Maithili Sabdakosa*).

Shri Mishra was born in a family of reputed Sanskrit scholars of Mithila then residing at Varanasi on November 20, 1922. He is the son of Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Umesha Mishra and grandson of Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Jayadeva Mishra.

Shri Mishra was brought up and educated at Allahabad where his father was a Sanskrit teacher in the university. In those days Allahabad had become the centre of modern European traditions in north India and he had the good fortune of imbibing them through his teacher Professor Amarnatha Jha. He had a brilliant career in the Department of English Studies and Modern European Languages and hence offered a lectureship in 1944 after getting his M.A. degree in English language and literature in 1943 from where he retired as Professor and Head of the Department in 1983. He was selected as Visiting Fellow in English at Sagar University from 1985 to 1988. He was called upon to the All India Board for Research Awards in Humanities in 1986 at Mysore. He was also the Dean, Faculty of Languages and Social Sciences, Chitrakoot Gramodaya Visvavidyalaya from 1992 to 1994.

Although Shri Mishra earned his livelihood as a renowned scholar of English language and literature, he has devoted almost his entire life in the service of Maithili language and literature. Shri Mishra was early interested in his mothertongue Maithili and his native region Mithila



Prof. Mishra with his parents and brothers

even as a young lad for the simple reason that matters connected with them used to be discussed every now and then in his home and that of Dr Sir Ganga Nath Jha, the then Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University. He had the unique opportunity of browsing in their Maithili libraries.

Shri Mishra's juvenile writings used to be circulated in handwritten children's magazine of his village Gajahara called *Balvinod*. The first significant piece of literary criticism, which got publicity, was a long review of Gangapati's novelette *Sushila* which was published in the celebrated Maithili weekly *Mithila Mihir* in 1943. Soon thereafter he organized a Sahitya Samiti in the university and took steps to hold literary gatherings frequently.

The Indian P. E. N. attracted his attention and he became attached to it as a Maithili writer since 1947. He attended its meetings held at Baroda (1957), Bhubaneswar (1959) and Lucknow (1964). He began his studies in Maithili literature under the guidance of Prof. Amarnatha Jha. Subsequently, his reputation grew up as an eminent writer of Maithili. It was in this context that he planned and got published his *A History of Maithili Literature* in two volumes and *An Introduction to the Folk Literature* in two parts.

After a chance meeting with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Mishra organized a historic National Maithili Book Exhibition in Delhi in 1963 and made concerted efforts to publish scholarly editions of Maithili classics. It was Shri



Prof. Mishra with Pandit Nehru

Mishra's critical essays on Maithili that poured in plenty in various journals and forums. He was invited to preside over various meets. His most important contribution was made on the study of *Kirtania Drama* in 1970. His magnum opus is *Brihat Maithili Sabdakosa* of which two volumes have come out from Simla and remaining volumes are in the course of publication.

The *Maithili Samachar*, a fortnightly bulletin of the All India Maithili Sahitya Samiti, Allahabad being edited by Shri Mishra since last 50 years, has created bonds of affinity, purposefulness, creativity and momentum in the world of Maithili letters.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. MAITHILI

ORIGINAL WORKS

TIRHUTA KAKAHARA, 1967.

PRATHMIK SHIKSHA 1969.

KIRTANIA NATAK, 1970.

BRIHAT MAITHILI SABDAKOSH (published by Institute of Advanced Study, Simla) Fascicule I, 1973; Fascicule II, 1995.

MAITHILI SAHITYAK ITIHAS (published by Sahitya Akademi), 1988.

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF OLD CLASSICS

GORAKSHAVIJAYA OF VIDYAPATI (1515 AD), 1960.

KIRTIPATAKA OF VIDYAPATI (1500 AD), along with Mm. Dr. Umesha Mishra, 1960.

RUKMINI PARINAYA OF RAMAPATI (1700 AD), 1960.

MAITHILIDHURTASAMAGAMA OF JYOTIRISHWARA (1325 AD), 1961.

GAURISVAYAMVARA OF LAL KAVI (1750 AD), 1962.

SRI KRISHNA-KELI-MALA OF NANDIPATI (1800 AD), 1962.

SRI KRISHNA-JANMA-RAHASYA OF SRIKANTA GANAK, (1800 AD), 1962.

GAURISVAYAMVARA OF KANHARAM (1842 AD), 1962.

GAURIPARINAYA OF SHIVADATTA (1850 AD), 1962.

B. ENGLISH

LECTURES ON THOMAS HARDY, 1955 & 1965.

LECTURES ON FOUR POETS, 1957 & 1963.

COMPLEX STYLE IN ENGLISH POETRY, 1977.

LECTURES ON FOUR POETS, Ist SERIES (Romantic Poets), 1987.

LECTURES ON FOUR POETS, IInd SERIES (Victorian Poets), 1992.

A CHRONOLOGY

1922 Born at Varanasi

1939 Married to Aprajita Devi herself a Maithili poetess and writer



Prof. Mishra lecturing at the Prof. Amarnath Jha Centenary Celebration, Allahabad



Prof. Mishra in his study

1943-to date President, All India Maithili Sahitya Samiti, Allahabad

1948 Member, Council of All India Oriental Conference

1963-82 Member, Advisory Board and General Council of Sahitya Akademi

1967-71 Secretary, G. N. Jha Research Institute, Allahabad

1971-74 Founder-Secretary, Dr Ishwari Pd. Institute of History, Allahabad

1973-74 Prabandha Mantri & Sangrahalaya Mantri, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad

1977 President, Diamond Jubilee Session of Asam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat

1984-89 Member, Executive Board of Maithili Akademi, Patna

1993 Inaugurated Ist International Maithili Conference, Ranchi

1995-99 Editor, Maithili Section of *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* and *Modern/Medieval Indian Literature*

AWARDS

1967 Samman Patra by Akhil Bhartiya Maithili Sammelan, Bombay

1989 Gaurinath Memorial Lectures

1990 Tamra Patra by Chetna Samiti, Patna

1995 Samman Patra by Mithila Sanskritik Sangam, Prayag

1999 Samman Patra by Vidyapati Samiti, Dhanbad